



HOW TO WRITE A MARKETING PLAN

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What is a Marketing Plan

A marketing plan provides direction for your marketing activities. Marketing plans need not be long or cost a lot to put together. Think of it as a road map, with detailed directions on how to get to your destination. Sure there may be a few bumps in the road, perhaps a diversion or two, but if the marketing plan is carefully researched, thoughtfully considered and evaluated, it will help the organization achieve its goals. The marketing plan details what you want to accomplish with your marketing strategy and helps you meet your objectives.

The marketing plan:

- Allows the organization to look internally in order to fully understand the impact and results of past marketing decisions.
- Allows the organization to look externally in order to fully understand the market in which it chooses to compete.
- Sets future goals and provides direction for future marketing efforts that everyone in the organization should understand and support.
- Is a key component in obtaining funding to pursue new initiatives.

A marketing plan includes these elements:

- Summary and Introduction
- Marketing Objectives
- Situation Analysis
- Target Markets
- Strategies
- Tracking and Evaluation

How do I begin? Where do I start?

Summary and Introduction

Your marketing plan should start with an executive summary. The summary gives a quick overview of the main points of the plan. It should be a synopsis of what you have done, what you plan to do, and how you are going to get there.

Although the executive summary appears at the beginning of the plan, you should write it last. Writing the summary is a good opportunity to check that your plan makes sense and that you haven't missed any important points.

Marketing Objectives

Your marketing objectives should be based on understanding your strengths and weaknesses, and the business environment in which you operate in. They should also be linked to your overall business strategy.

For example, suppose your business objectives include increasing visitation by 10 percent over the next year. Your marketing objectives might include targeting a promising or emerging new market segment to help achieve this growth.

As with any strategic initiative a marketing plan should start with objectives. Your marketing objectives will guide your entire marketing initiative and be used for evaluation. Without objectives you may get off-track and will not know when you have reached your ultimate goal.

Your objectives often focus on your specific target market(s). Objectives must:

- Be measurable in quantitative terms, such as number of visitors, sales volume, and so forth. By having quantitative objectives, you will have a clear target to strive toward and will know when the objective has been achieved.
- Be framed within a specific time period.
- Be outcome based. In other words, what is the end result you are looking for?

Example:

The overall goal of Bisbee's tourism marketing program is to create enhanced public awareness through a comprehensive marketing campaign that will result in increased overnight visitation. Bisbee has 290 rooms in various hotels, motels and bed & breakfast establishments; they would like to see a 10 percent increase in occupancy. The city also has approximately five dozen retail and service merchants, as well as more than 30 lodging and bar and restaurant establishments; they anticipate an increased economic impact measured through tax revenues, or an additional \$500,000. Bisbee's marketing program has the following objectives:

- Increase overnight visitation from leisure travelers thus positively impacting tax revenues on an annual basis; increase visitation by 10 percent.
- Increase the length of time visitors stay in Bisbee and convert day trip visitors to overnight visitors thus positively impacting bed tax revenues; increase length of stay from ½ day to one overnight.
- Promote the community as a viable and worthy destination of choice in the off-season (May through December), especially capitalizing on summer traffic.
- Maximize limited marketing dollars to enhance Bisbee's desirability as an overnight destination to targeted audiences during the high-season (January through April). Leverage marketing dollars through the TEAM program and identify one new funding source.

Situation Analysis

A situation analysis details the context for your marketing efforts. In this section you will take a close look at the internal and external factors that will influence your marketing strategy, this is called a SWOT analysis. A SWOT analysis combines the external and internal analysis to summarize your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.